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UNCLAS OTTAWA 001432

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE PASS USTR FOR SCHANDLER AND SBOMER
USDA FOR APHIS AND FAS/DLP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [TBIO](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: CANADA REPORTS FIRST NORTH AMERICA BSE CASE

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ACCORDINGLY.

11. (U) Canadian Agriculture Minister Lyle Van Clief notified Ambassador on May 20 that the Minister would announce that afternoon Canada's (and North America's) first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in an animal not imported from Europe. Agriculture Canada's draft press release -- faxed to WHA/CAN and USTR -- notes that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has quarantined the farm in northern Alberta where Canada's ongoing BSE surveillance program had identified a suspect animal at slaughter and declared its meat unfit to enter the food chain. The animal was rendered and CFIA is now investigating the uses to which its tallow and gelatin might have been put (Note: Canada prohibits use of bone meal or other byproducts in feed for other ruminant animals. End Note). Specimens from the suspect animal were sent to the World Reference Library in the UK, which informed the GOC on May 20 that it had verified the presence of BSE. CFIA is now tracking down the animal's origin, determining how its remains were processed and ensuring that it identifies all calves originating from the 150-head herd. Once the entire herd has been tested, it and any other herds determined to be at risk will be destroyed.

12. (SBU) The GOC has acted quickly to deal with the threat BSE poses to the Alberta beef industry and to maintain confidence in the CFIA's BSE surveillance program. The Minister's message to the Ambassador, efforts by Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade officials to touch base with USG counterparts and ongoing contacts between CFIA and APHIS underscore the Canadians' understanding that this is a North American problem. Canadian officials with whom Emboffs have discussed the issue have actively solicited USG advice on how best to manage any health or trade fallout from this discovery and indicated their willingness to work with us to ensure that there are no further cases. Beef cattle and meat products account for 13 percent of Canada's agricultural exports and 22 percent of ag exports to the U.S. (US\$ 2.25 billion annually), so the stakes are very high.

13. (SBU) Comment: The GOC has been greatly concerned by USG plans to implement a Congressionally mandated country-of-origin labelling program for beef cattle. However, had such a program been in place when this infected animal was found, its origin would have been immediately evident, saving considerable investigative time and effort.
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